

Service Date: July 15, 1999

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATION  
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

\* \* \* \* \*

IN THE MATTER OF the Petition of	)	UTILITY DIVISION
Ronan Telephone Company for Suspension of	)	
Provisions of the 1996 Telecommunications Act,	)	DOCKET NO. D99.4.111
pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 251(f)(2) and 253(b)	)	ORDER NO. 6174a

PROTECTIVE ORDER

On June 25, 1999 Ronan Telephone Company (Ronan) filed with the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC or Commission) a Motion for Protective Order "to protect the confidentiality of documents, records, etc. which constitute trade secrets, confidential or other privileged information, which [Ronan] may submit to the Commission and parties in the context of this Docket." Ronan requested a protective order pursuant to Section 69-3-105, MCA, "and in the form ordinarily issued by the Commission, except that [Ronan] requests the deletion of the following sentence from the Commission's standard order: 'Any such expert may not be an officer, director, or employee of the parties . . . .' See e.g. Order No. 6102 in Docket D98.9.213." Ronan requested this exception to allow its President, also an expert witness in this Docket, to review proprietary information.

The Commission grants Ronan's motion in part and issues this Protective Order to cover information claimed confidential by parties to this Docket. By issuing this Order the Commission does not represent that any information submitted under it is protectable under Montana law. The Commission denies Ronan's request to alter the language at paragraph 1(b). The PSC orders that proprietary information submitted in accordance with this Order be treated as "confidential" under the terms of this Order. It is further ordered that the following Protective Order provisions shall be in effect:

1. (a) Confidential Information. All documents, data, information, studies and other materials furnished pursuant to any interrogatories or requests for information, subpoenas, depositions, or other modes of discovery, or pursuant to Commission order, that are claimed to be of a trade secret, privileged, or confidential nature shall be furnished pursuant to the terms of this Order, and shall be treated by all persons accorded access thereto pursuant to this Order as constituting trade secret, confidential, or privileged commercial and financial information (hereinafter referred to as "Confidential Information"), and shall neither be used nor disclosed except for the purpose of this proceeding, and solely in accordance with this Order. All material claimed to be Confidential Information shall be submitted on yellow paper and so marked by the party or affiliate by stamping the same with a designation indicating its trade secret, proprietary, or confidential nature.

(b) Use of Confidential Information and Persons Entitled to Review. All Confidential Information made available pursuant to this Order shall be given solely to counsel for the parties, and shall not be used or disclosed except for purposes of this proceeding; provided, however, that access to any specific Confidential Information may be authorized by said counsel, solely for the purpose of this proceeding, to those persons indicated by the parties as being their experts in this matter. Any such expert may not be an officer, director or employee (except legal counsel) of the parties, or an officer, director, employee or stockholder or member of an association or corporation of which any party is a member, subsidiary, or affiliate. Any member of the Commission, and any member of its staff, the Montana Consumer Counsel, and any member of his staff may have access to any Confidential Information made available pursuant to this Order, and shall be bound by the terms of this Order.

(c) Nondisclosure Agreement. Prior to giving access to Confidential Information as contemplated in paragraph 1(b) above to any expert, counsel for the party seeking review of the Confidential Information shall deliver a copy of this Order to such person, and prior to disclosure such person shall agree in writing to comply with and be bound by this Order. In connection therewith, Confidential Information shall not be disclosed to any person who has not signed a nondisclosure agreement in the form which is attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit "A." Court reporters shall also sign an Exhibit "A." The nondisclosure agreement (Exhibit "A") shall require all persons to whom disclosure is to be made to read a copy of this

Protective Order and to certify in writing that they have reviewed the same and consent to be bound by its terms. The agreement shall contain the signatory's full name, permanent address and employer, and the name of the party with whom the signatory is associated. Such agreement shall be delivered to counsel for the providing party and to the Commission.

(d) Delivery of Documentation. Where feasible, Confidential Information will be marked as such and delivered to counsel. In the alternative, the Confidential Information may be made available for inspection and be reviewed by counsel and experts as defined in paragraph 1(a)-(c) herein in a place and a time mutually agreed on by the parties, or as directed by the Commission.

2. Challenge to Confidentiality.

(a) This Order establishes a procedure for the expeditious handling of information that a party claims is confidential; it shall not be construed as an agreement or ruling on the confidentiality of any such document.

(b) In the event that the parties hereto are unable to agree that certain documents, data, information, studies or other matters constitute trade secret, confidential, or privileged commercial and financial information, the party objecting to the trade secret claim shall forthwith submit the said matters to the Commission for its review pursuant to this Order. When the Commission rules on the question of whether any documents, data, information, studies, or other matters submitted to it for review and determination are, or are not, Confidential Information, the Commission will enter an order resolving the issue.

(c) Any party at any time upon ten (10) days prior notice may seek by appropriate pleading to have documents that have been designated as Confidential Information or which were accepted into the sealed record in accordance with this Order removed from the protective requirements of this Order or from the sealed record and placed in the public record. If the confidential or proprietary nature of this information is challenged, resolution of the issue shall be made by a hearing examiner or the Commission after proceedings in camera, which shall be conducted under circumstances such that only those persons duly authorized hereunder to have access to such confidential matter shall be present. The record of such in camera hearings shall be marked "CONFIDENTIAL--SUBJECT TO PROTECTIVE ORDER IN DOCKET NO. D99.4.111." It shall be transcribed only upon agreement by the parties or Order of the Hearing

Examiner or the Commission, and in that event shall be separately bound, segregated, sealed, and withheld from inspection by any person not bound by the terms of this Order, unless and until released from the restrictions of this Order either through agreement of the parties, or after notice to the parties and hearing, pursuant to an Order of the Hearing Examiner or the Commission. In the event that the Hearing Examiner or the Commission should rule in response to such a pleading that any information should be removed from the protective requirements of this Order or from the protection of the sealed record, the parties, at the request of the providing party and to enable the providing party to seek a stay or other relief, shall not disclose such information or use it in the public record for five (5) business days.

3. Seal. While in the custody of the Commission, materials subject to this Order shall be marked "CONFIDENTIAL--SUBJECT TO PROTECTIVE ORDER IN DOCKET NO. D99.4.111," and due to their trade secret nature they shall not be considered as records in the possession or retained by the Commission within the meaning of the open meetings or public records statutes.

4. Use in Pleadings, Briefs, etc. Where reference to Confidential Information in the sealed record is required in pleadings, briefs, argument or motions, it shall be by citation of title or exhibit number or by some other nonconfidential description. Any further use of or substantive references to Confidential Information shall be placed in a separate section of the pleading or brief and submitted to the Commission under seal. This sealed section shall be served only on counsel of record (one copy each), who have signed an Exhibit "A." All protection afforded in this Order apply to materials prepared and distributed under this paragraph.

5. (a) Use in Decisions and Orders. The Hearing Examiner or the Commission will attempt to refer to Confidential Information in only a general or summary form and will avoid reproduction in any decision of Confidential Information to the greatest possible extent. If it is necessary for a determination in this proceeding to discuss Confidential Information other than in a general or summary form, it shall be placed in a separate section of the Order or decision under seal. This sealed section shall be served only on counsel of record (one copy each) who have signed an Exhibit "A." Counsel for other parties shall receive the cover sheet to the sealed por-

tion and may review the sealed portion on file with the Commission once they have signed an Exhibit "A."

(b) Summary of Proprietary Information. In all instances when material is filed with the Commission pursuant to this Order which is considered to be Confidential Information, the provider shall concurrently file a brief non-proprietary written summary of the Confidential Information. In other instances, if deemed necessary by the Commission, the provider shall prepare a written summary of the Confidential Information referred to in a Commission decision or Order, for placement in the public record.

6. Segregation of Files. All Confidential Information filed with the Commission will be sealed by the Commission, segregated in the files of the Commission, and withheld from inspection by any person not bound by the terms of this Order, unless such Confidential Information is released from the restrictions of this Order either through agreement of the parties or, after notice to the parties and hearing, pursuant to the Order of the Commission or final order of a Court having jurisdiction. All written Confidential Information coming into the possession of the Montana Consumer Counsel under this Order may be retained by it in its office files, but shall be withheld from inspection by others, except for its staff and experts, unless released by the Commission or a final order of a court under this paragraph and subject always to the terms of paragraph 7 of this Order.

7. Preservation of Confidentiality. All persons who may be entitled to receive, or who are afforded access to any Confidential Information by reason of this Order shall neither use nor disclose the Confidential Information for purposes of business or competition, or any other purpose other than the purposes of preparation for and conduct of this proceeding, and then solely as contemplated herein, and shall take reasonable precautions to keep the Confidential Information secure and in accordance with the purposes and intent of this Order.

8. Reservation of Rights. The parties hereto affected by the terms of this Protective Order further retain the right to question, challenge, and object to the admissibility of any and all data, information, studies and other matters furnished under the terms of this Protective Order in response to interrogatories, requests for information or cross-examination on the grounds of relevancy or materiality.

This Order shall in no way constitute any waiver of the rights of any party herein to contest any assertion or finding of trade secret, confidentiality or privilege, and to appeal any such determination of the Commission or such assertion by a party.

DONE AND DATED this 13th day of July, 1999, by a vote of 5-0.

BY ORDER OF THE MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

---

DAVE FISHER, Chair

---

NANCY MCCAFFREE, Vice Chair

---

BOB ANDERSON, Commissioner

---

GARY FELAND, Commissioner

---

BOB ROWE, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kathlene M. Anderson  
Commission Secretary

(SEAL)

NOTE: Any interested party may request the Commission to reconsider this decision. A motion to reconsider must be filed within ten (10) days. See 38.2.4806, ARM.

EXHIBIT "A"

I have reviewed the foregoing Protective Order in Ronan Telephone Company Docket No. D99.4.111 dated July 13, 1999 and agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of such order.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed or Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employer or Firm

\_\_\_\_\_  
Business Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Party

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date